

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 320 893

SP 032 448

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TITLE COPE: Collaboration Options for Parents and Educators. Training Program Outline.
PUB DATE 90
NOTE 19p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Communication Skills; Feedback; Group Discussion; *Listening Skills; *Parent Teacher Cooperation; Problem Solving; Program Development; *Special Education; *Workshops

ABSTRACT

An outline for a communication strategies training program/workshop is provided that is specifically designed to meet the preservice and inservice needs of special educators. It is based upon the collaborative consultant model and provides specific, but flexible, training plans. The various communication strategies are described: (1) empathetic listening, (2) brainstorming, (3) paraphrasing, (4) feedback, (5) defusing, (6) negotiation, and (7) problem solving. Activities for the development of skills are provided and suggestions for appropriate scenarios are given. There are sufficient materials for a 2-day workshop or it could be tailored for less time or for presentation on an ongoing basis. (Author/JD)

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COPE:
Collaboration Options for Parents and Educators
Training Program Outline

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PREFACE

When this outline was prepared, it was predicated upon several assumptions. First, it was assumed that the workshop presenter would have sufficient background information to expand the information contained in the outline, or that extensive use of the furnished bibliography would be made. You are being given an outline, not a complete course of study. You need to furnish the knowledge base.

The second assumption is that any leader would want to make the final determination of the content of the workshop, based either on a needs assessment or professional judgment. Therefore, any of the communication strategies can be developed in isolation or combined with other strategies. Obviously, there is so much material that some choices will have to be made in order to stay within time constraints.

Third, it was believed that it is important to individualize and personalize the training, according to the temperament of the leader and the dynamics of the group. It is possible to emphasize dimensions of the material according to these parameters.

Fourth, when deciding which strategies to develop, the "goal" that is specified for each strategy should assist you by identifying the degree of sophistication and the type of experience required for each activity. Strategies such as problem-solving, the management of resistance, and negotiation are more sophisticated.

A final consideration is the determination of what kind of involvement would benefit the participants. Do you believe that they can benefit from observing other role players, as much as being involved themselves as role players? Or will active participation be a more effective learning environment? As such, you can either have the entire group observe one set of role players, or you can break the participants into groups of 6 or 8 and insure greater active involvement. You are best qualified to make the determination.

When a group of people works on a project, the division of labor is often unclear, but this project was well organized. Therefore, credit needs to be given to the appropriate people. Dr. Stinson was assigned the responsibility of developing a training program outline to be given to the persons attending our presentations. Dr. Bonnington and Dr. Walters thought up the catchy title of this project; Dr. Stedt compiled part of the bibliography; Dr. McElroy has information for role-playing theory; and Mrs. Wheeler researched communicating with parents literature. Their efforts were appreciated.

The most relevant acknowledgment must go to Nancy Stinson, my secretary. She spent untold hours retyping my revisions, with only a smile when I told her it would be "one more time."

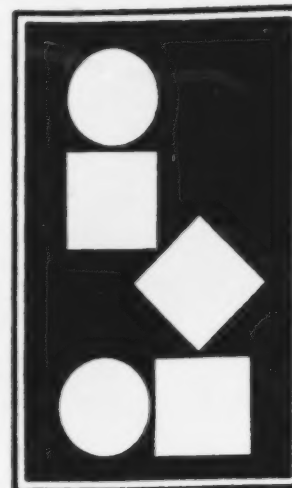
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COPE: COLLABORATION OPTIONS FOR PARENTS AND EDUCATORS

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Greet participants
- B. Speaker's interest in topic (establish credibility)
- C. Warmup I - The communication dilemma; intended and perceived meanings.
 - . Goal: Awareness that what we say is not always comprehended as we intended.
 - . Select two cooperative participants
 - . One participant will be "the teacher"
 - . One participant will be "the student"
 - . Without repeating any instructions, the teacher is to give directions orally to the student to draw the illustrated figure
 - . Replicate the figure in some form so that it is visible to the audience
 - . If there is sufficient time, other participants and drawings can be utilized
- D. Warmup II
 - . Goal: Recognition of the problems of serial communication
 - . Select six participants, having four leave the room
 - . Person A will be given a message in writing by the leader
 - . Person B will record each person's message for review purposes
 - . Person A, having read the message, will orally deliver the message to Person C when he returns to the room.
 - . Person C will then orally give the message to Person D
 - . Person D and E will go through the same process
 - . When Person F is given the message, Person B will then read the original message, and each message given, in sequence.
 - . A discussion can follow, if desired.



II. NEED FOR TRAINING

- A. The collaborative consultant model for special educators
 - . The model of collaborative consultation has several premises. First, it envisions the provision of services to handicapped students as "an interactive

process that enables people with diverse expertise to generate creative solutions to mutually defined problems." (Idol, Paolucci-Whitcomb, & Nevin, 1986).

- . Second, within the collaborative consultant model, the special educator could serve as a consultant with regular classroom teachers, parents, support staff, vocational teachers, and employers. (West & Brown, 1987).

B. Communication strategies for successful collaborative consultation include:

Interpersonal problem solving	Managing time
Communicating nonverbally	Paraphrasing
Managing resistance	Making decisions
Following through on interactions	Collecting data
Listening empathetically	Contracting
Resolving conflict	Interviewing
Giving and receiving feedback	Observing
In-service training	Negotiating

(Friend, 1985)

III. THE COPE TRAINING PLAN

A. General principles of effective communication

- . Attitude: Good collaborative behavior is actually more a matter of attitude than skill. Attitudes related to good interpersonal skills include warmth, genuineness, acceptance, understanding, openness, honesty, and fairness.
- . Responses to avoid: If your goal is to elicit and to exchange as much information as possible then you should avoid making the following types of responses: judgmental or evaluative statements, probing statements, hostile statements, or false reassurance statements.
- . Effective responses: One major principle of effective communication is to keep the interaction flowing. One effective way to initiate the collaborative process would be the use of open-ended questions, such as: "Tell me what's happening?" or "How can I help you?".
- . Keep interaction flowing: Transitional phrases such as "Yes" or "I see" said with inflection imply that your colleague should continue talking about the same topic. Silence also gives a person time to think and to continue.
- . Responding: To make a response relevant to what has been communicated you may use any of the following types of statements: verbatim playback, restatements, reflective echoes, or summarizing.

(Kaplan & Saccuzzo, 1982)

- B. Specific communication strategies deemed necessary for the special educator which are incorporated in the COPE model. (See training plan materials section for complete explanations of these terms.)

Empathetic listening
Negotiation
Brainstorming
Paraphrasing

Feedback
Problem solving
Defusing

C. Role playing theory

- . The term "role playing" represents an action-spontaneity procedure that takes place under contrived circumstances. It has three purposes: (1) diagnosing-- to provide better understanding of the role players by seeing and hearing them in action; (2) informing-- to give the observers information about how certain roles should be filled; and (3) training-- to provide the role players with knowledge and skills by permitting them to experience a nearly real situation and to provide feedback to help them better understand themselves and their behavior (Shaw, 1980).
- . Role playing creates a reality setting by dramatizing various situations. It not only promotes better communication skills, but also enhances creativity, increases social awareness, independent thinking, verbalization of opinions, and the development and examination of values (Shaw, 1980).
- . Other benefits include: conceptualizing alternative ways of facing situations; a cathartic effect by reducing frustration and generally clearing the air; gaining insight about other points of view; bringing feelings into focus; and developing a non-judgmental attitude (Shaftel & Shaftel, 1982).
- . Role playing employs the following steps:
 1. "Warming up" the group-- problem confrontation
 - . It creates an awareness of the problem at hand and involves the group emotionally.
 - . There is a need to express the problem in detail.
 - . Use a specific example.
 - . The technique of the "problem story" can be utilized by the creation of a specific situation with an open-ended format.
 2. Selecting participants for role playing
 - . Choose people who are noticeably identified with the roles (as an initial strategy).
 - . Then involve more reticent persons in nonthreatening roles.
 3. Setting the stage
 - . Have the role players briefly plan what they want to say.
 - . Check with them to verify their plans.

4. Preparing the audience to be participating observers
 - . Orient the group for listening strategies.
 - . Share with them the goals of the play.
5. Role playing (the enactment)
 - . The participants must "feel/live" the roles.
 - . There is no set plot; no script; it is spontaneous, but some preplanning of the roles is usually involved.
6. Discussion and evaluation
 - . The discussion is also spontaneous.
 - . There is much "give and take."
 - . The leader provides guidance, based upon expertise.
7. The reenactment (OPTIONAL)
 - . Is there need for further exploration and discussion?
 - . Use same role players or select new players.
8. Sharing experience and generalizing
 - . A time for general discussion, the sharing of personal experiences.
 - . A time for principles and generalizations of techniques to become evident.

(Shaftel & Shaftel, 1982)

D. Video taping

- . One benefit of video taping is to make it possible for the role players to view themselves.
- . Another benefit of video taping is to permit the observers to reanalyze/react to the play.
- . Another benefit is that well-done portrayals could be used in other learning situation.
- . Role players usually require some desensitizing to being filmed before self-consciousness disappears.

(Shaw, 1980)

IV. TRAINING PLANS

A. Introduction

- . Various role playing techniques will be used in the training segments. In some instances, role playing will be utilized for the purpose of becoming aware of a specific technique that will be used in complex collaborative situations. In other instances, a complex strategy, such as problem-solving or negotiation will be addressed. Additionally, becoming aware of the expressions of feelings that are evident in collaborative settings can be analyzed. In other words, there are opportunities to develop specific strategies through role playing, or to become aware of the process sequence of events or steps needed in a collaborative effort, or to become aware of personality dimensions of the role player.

STRATEGY: Empathetic listening

GOAL: To understand another person's perspective.

RATIONALE: When you listen empathetically, you seek answers to the questions, "Why does the person say that?", "What does it mean to him?". Only by understanding others' perspectives can you relate to a person, rather than trying to understand about them. It requires getting their point of view. By becoming actively involved, the empathetic listener tries to hear the message as the message giver intended to present it.

PROCEDURES:

1. Choose four players.
2. Assign a sender of a message and three listeners of the message.
3. Have the sender take several minutes to plan his message.
4. The listeners are told to determine the main idea of the message; the motivation behind the message; the hidden agenda behind the message; and the bias/orientation of the message. (This is listening empathetically.)
5. The speaker makes his presentation.
6. The listeners, without consulting each other will share their perceptions of the speaker's intent.
7. Discussion or the verification of the compatibility of the speaker's and listener's agreement of the message sent and received.

SCENARIO: A parent is making a plea that his child be totally mainstreamed.

SCENARIO: A regular classroom teacher wants a child removed from his classroom.

SCENARIO: A special educator is presenting arguments to support an EMR student being placed in a mainstreamed art class.

STRATEGY: Brainstorming

GOAL: How to obtain all possible relevant ideas for a given situation.

RATIONALE: Brainstorming involves setting aside a period of time during which members agree to offer ideas without any criticism or evaluation by the other members. The purpose of this exercise is to enhance creative and problem-solving ideas appropriate for the problem or decision area. As there is no criticism or evaluation of the presented ideas, individuals are most likely to offer suggestions.

PROCEDURES:

1. Select a group of four participants; six would be better.
2. One person is designated as the recorder, who writes down all ideas.
3. One person is designated as the observer, who is to stop anyone who starts to react, positively or negatively, to the presented ideas.
4. The group is given the following instructions: "For the next _____ minutes, we will list all possible solutions/objectives/goals/ideas that we can think of for (scenario). There is to be no criticism or objections to any of the contributions to the list. We want to get as many ideas as possible."
5. For the purposes of this exercise, there are to be no evaluations made of the ideas that are presented. When utilized in a problem-solving or decision-making situation, the ideas would be evaluated.

SCENARIO: How to adapt instruction for a physically handicapped student (paraplegic) in chemistry.

SCENARIO: How to get a set of parents involved in planning a respite care program.

SCENARIO: How to get a regular classroom teacher involved in providing services.

STRATEGY: Paraphrasing

GOAL: Help the listener to verify the accuracy of his listening skills.

RATIONALE: Paraphrasing requires that you encode a new set of words, which serves as a way of checking the meaning of the message. It is an appropriate strategy to utilize when it is necessary to check the accuracy of what was said.

PROCEDURES:

1. Select two players.
2. Based on the scenario, assign the speaker and the receiver of the message.
3. The speaker explains his position/feelings/attitude.
4. The receiver must paraphrase the message by prefacing his statement with the phrase, "Do I hear you saying that?" or similar type phrases.
5. Avoid asking such phrases as, "Do you mean?" or "What do you mean by?" These phrases promote hostility.
6. The speaker then verifies the accuracy of the reiteration or summary statement made by listener.

SCENARIO: The parent is explaining the medical history of their child.

SCENARIO: The parent is explaining why they want their child in a self-contained classroom.

SCENARIO: The regular classroom teacher is explaining the difficulties a student is having in his class.

STRATEGY: Feedback

GOAL: Help the speaker to determine how the message was received.

RATIONALE: Feedback is the link that connects the source (the message giver) and the receiver of the message and serves as a check by the message giver of the perceptions of the receiver (what he is thinking, feeling). It is how the message giver checks to see that the message sent is the one received. The response to a message isn't the same as someone's perception of the response. The four categories of feedback are: (1) intentional feedback-congruence between verbal and nonverbal messages by the listener to emphasize communication; (2) unintentional feedback-differences between actual and perceived responses (ex. - conflict between what is said and body language); (3) directive feedback-positive or negative responses of an evaluation that is evident to the message giver; and (4) nondirective feedback-nonevaluative responses, asking questions, nodding, head, or personal reactions.

PROCEDURES:

1. Choose two participants, a speaker, and a listener.
2. Choose a scenario.
3. Decide which kind of feedback to role play.
4. Have participants plan before presenting.
5. Have audience identify what kind of feedback is being depicted.
6. OR do not plan before presentation and be extemporaneous.
7. Depict each of the kinds of feedback.

SCENARIO: The regular classroom teacher is conferring with the special educator.

SCENARIO: The special educator is sharing information with the school principal.

SCENARIO: The special educator is having an informal conference with a parent.

STRATEGY: Defusing

GOAL: How to redirect angry parents into a constructive frame of mind.

RATIONALE: Educators are often expected to deal with irate, upset, abusive, and insulting parents. Regardless of the motivation of the parents, it is critical that educators maintain their professionalism. This exercise provides a sequence of strategies that will assist in gaining the cooperation of parents, while alleviating the expressed frustration or anger, thus, turning the confrontation into a positive episode.

PROCEDURES:

1. Select two participants to be the parent and educator.
2. Select one of the scenarios listed below as the focus of the parent's behavior.
3. Give the participant(teacher) time to prepare himself.
4. Follow the general outline as follows:
 - . Parent arrives, shouting and making negative comments about the school and teacher.
 - . Teacher remains calm and courteous; makes natural eye contact with parent, but remains silent.
 - . At an opportune time during the tirade, ask the parents to repeat their concerns. Teacher remains calm.
 - . At various times during the parent's restatement of the problem, the teacher makes reflective statements (see paraphrasing) of what the parent has said for clarification.
 - . The teacher only addresses the content of the communication, not the anger being expressed.
 - . The purpose of this is for the parents to begin trusting the teacher and to recognize their own frustration.
 - . As the parents continue to talk, the teacher begins to ask open-ended questions that require more than a "yes" or "no", which encourages the parents to express themselves even more.
 - . The teacher then utilizes empathetic listening strategies (see empathetic listening).
 - . The teacher begins to identify points of agreement, as the parent continues to express himself in a less threatening manner.
 - . Depending upon the need, problem-solving strategies can be applied to the remaining issues (see problem-solving).

SCENARIO: The student is not permitted to play football because of a low grade point average.

SCENARIO: The student has been given six hours of detention for fighting and the parent doesn't think it is necessary.

SCENARIO: The student has been mistreated by other students during lunchtime and recess.

STRATEGY: Negotiation

GOAL: Discuss and bargain to reach a decision by majority rule.

RATIONALE: When there is a team of people who have a vested interest in the education of an individual, there may be (and probably should be) different perspectives and/or solutions seen by individuals. The way in which a decision can be made is through the negotiation process. Negotiations are based upon individual developing a rational/logical attitude and the professional commitment of having the needs of the handicapped individual foremost.

PROCEDURES:

1. Select six participants and assign the roles of parents, administrator, regular classroom teacher, special educator, speech pathologist, and physical therapist.
2. Select a scenario to role play.
3. Each role player is to plan the attitude to be displayed and the goals (stance) to be taken.
4. Role play by following a prepared agenda designed to facilitate negotiations.
 - I. Awareness: Members attempt to clarify the goal of the meeting; establish a positive climate; elect leader, if not already established.
 - . What is the specific goal? (Do not deviate.)
 - . Are there any known factors to be addressed?
 - . Are there any things that must be taken as as mandates?
 - . Are there points of view to be considered that are not represented in the group?
 - . Is there a need for a plan to insure participation by everyone?
 - II. Develop a list of perceived needs (goals/objectives/services).
 - . Give each person an opportunity.
 - . Do not allow evaluative statements to be made by anyone at this time.
 - III. Rank the needs presented by the members (majority rule).
 - . Put items into one of two categories (necessary vs. desirable).
 - IV. Identify any obstacles to reaching goals.
 - . Can the obstacle be removed?
 - . Is the obstacle temporary or permanent?
 - V. Develop alternative means for reaching goals.
 - . This is the time to add to the original list or to revise or delete from the list.
 - VI. Analysis
 - . Will any of the goals work? (Be pragmatic/realistic)
 - . Can they be implemented? Which ones?

- . Which one addresses most of the "wants and musts?"
- VII. Tentative selection of goals
 - . Select the goal that achieves most needs
- VIII. Evaluate the goal
 - . What are the undesirable facets of the plan?
 - . What are the obstacles?
- IX. Evaluate another goal
 - . Select another alternative and go through the same process if consensus is not reached.
 - . Is this a workable plan? (go through the same steps)
 - . If there is still lack of consensus, go through the same process with the next objective.
 - . Or return to the original objective for reevaluation.
 - . Continue until there is agreement.

SCENARIO: Trying to decide upon the goals to include on the student's IEP.

SCENARIO: Trying to determine which related services are needed.

SCENARIO: Trying to determine the most appropriate mainstreamed classes for the student.

STRATEGY: Problem-solving

GOAL: To determine what approaches or solutions are most likely to overcome obstacles.

RATIONALE: All involved personnel have professional and personal needs to be satisfied in group problem-solving settings. These legitimate needs are as important as addressing the needs of the student under consideration. Solutions which satisfy all parties can be addressed in a respectful manner, with the utilization of a systematic problem-solving strategy.

PROCEDURES:

1. Select a group of four participants and assign their role (special education teacher, school counselor, regular classroom teacher, and principal).
2. Select a scenario and elect a group leader.
3. Give each person a chance to plan their role, within the context of the scenario.
4. Gain an understanding of each other's needs by role playing some general conversation.
5. Gain an understanding of the difficulties surrounding the designated problem.
6. Identify the difficulties that have previously prohibited a solution.
7. Develop a statement that summarizes the problem area, with the total group.
8. Brainstorm solutions to the problem (see brainstorming).
9. Identify the resources needed to resolve problem.
10. Evaluate ideas with previously agreed upon criteria.
11. Select several solutions that appear to have the majority of the group's approval.
12. Attempt to obtain group consensus (see negotiating).
13. Decide upon final solution by majority, if not total agreement.

SCENARIO: There is disagreement as to the appropriate program of vocational training for a student.

SCENARIO: The regular classroom teacher and special educator can't decide what are the most appropriate adaptations to instruction in mathematics.

SCENARIO: There is disagreement by the IEP team as what constitutes the least restrictive environment for a student.

Annotated Bibliography

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Rogers, C. (1965). Client-Centered Therapy. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Publishing.

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Shaftel, F., & Shaftel, G. (1982). Role Playing in the Curriculum. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

This book is designed for utilizing role playing in elementary school programs.

Shaw, M., Corsini, R., Blake, R., & Mouton, J. (1980). Role Playing: A Practical Manual for Group Facilitators. San Diego: University Associates, Inc.

While oriented toward management and executive training, the book provides relevant information on techniques and applications of role playing.

Taylor, A., Rosegrant, T., Meyer, A., & Samples, B. (1977). Communicating. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

This book was written "to help people learn to use communication more effectively in their daily lives."

West, J.F., & Idol, L. (1987). School consultation (Part I): An interdisciplinary perspective on theory, models and research. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 20, 388-408.

Defines consultation and explores underlying theories and knowledge bases. Examines several different consultation models. Investigates goals, steps/stages and responsibilities in consultation.